

lives, that I rise in support of this much overdue resolution, because as Administrator Michael Griffin stated earlier this year, "not all of NASA's heroes fly in space."

Madam Speaker, these heroes have their feet rooted solidly on the ground and work so hard to do so much for so many. I proudly salute them.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GORDON. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I might consume.

First, Madam Speaker, let me point out this resolution before us today is because of the hard work of Representative MELANCON from Louisiana. I thank our chairman for his help in bringing this before us today.

Madam Speaker, I want to speak in strong support of House Resolution 892, a resolution honoring the dedication of the employees of NASA's Michoud Assembly Facility who stayed at their post during Hurricane Katrina, and protected critical space program assets.

Madam Speaker, as you know, during late August of last year, Hurricane Katrina severely assaulted Southeast Louisiana and the Mississippi coast, resulting in massive damage and the evacuation of large numbers of citizens.

Yet, in the midst of the storm, there were countless examples of heroism. One example is the way in which 38 members of the Michoud Hurricane Ride-out Team stayed and protected the NASA Michoud Assembly Facility instead of fleeing the area.

These people deserve our thanks and praise for their dedication to preserving the Michoud Assembly Facility during the hurricane's passage through the region. By risking their own lives, they assured that Michoud was preserved as a vital facility in spite of the devastation wrought by Katrina.

During the hurricane, members of the ride-out team were able to keep the generators running, keep the pumps going, and protect the facilities and flight hardware that were entrusted to them. In addition, they were able to successfully ensure that the water from Hurricane Katrina did not overrun Michoud.

Madam Speaker, due to the team's skill, knowledge, and most importantly, their dedication, Michoud's external tank production for the space shuttle program was able to resume less than 5 weeks after the storm.

Madam Speaker, I think it is only fitting and proper that we honor these brave individuals for their heroic deeds, and I, once again, thank Representative MELANCON for bringing this before us. I strongly urge passage of House Resolution 892.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Madam Speaker, I rise today to commend the members of the "Michoud Hurricane Ride-Out Team" for their extraordinary efforts to protect NASA's Michoud Assembly Facility in the face of Hurricane Katrina. The employees of NASA, Lock-

heed Martin, and members of the New Orleans Fire Department who made up this team exhibited uncommon bravery and dedication. Cut off from the surrounding area due to roadway flooding, they remained on-site despite the lack of electricity and severely limited communications. These individuals willingly stayed on the facility in the face of the approaching storm and operated the pumps and generators that kept the facility dry.

As a result of the team's commitment, damage to the facility and the external tanks and hardware they produce was minimal. Within 5 weeks, the Michoud Assembly Facility was resuming production operations. I would like to thank the members of the team once again for their courage. The nation is grateful for the contributions they have made to the space program.

Mr. CALVERT. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res. 892, which recognizes the dedication of the employees at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, NASA, Michoud Assembly Facility. The end of next month is the anniversary of Hurricane Katrina's landfall on our Gulf coast. Today we celebrate the bravery exhibited by the "Michoud Hurricane Ride-out Team," which saved not only the facility, but also our Nation's manned space program.

Last week, both Houses of Congress passed H. Con. Res. 448, which commended the men and women of NASA, the crew of the Space Shuttle Discovery, and NASA Administrator Mike Griffin for the successful conclusion of the second return to flight test mission—STS—121. This would not have been possible without the 38 brave members of the Michoud Ride-out Team. Many of the members of this team lost their homes and did not know the fate of their families until days after the Hurricane. They risked their lives manning generators and pumps at the Michoud Facility to protect the Shuttle's external tank program and, hence, the future of the manned space program.

Despite the facility's proximity to the center of the hurricane's destructive path, only one external tank was damaged when a concrete panel fell and bounced off the side of the tank. Despite the extensive damage to the 832-acre facility and the entire surrounding area, the Ride-out team exhibited the bravery and the pride for the importance of the space program not only to our Nation, but also to the area in Louisiana.

In September, as Chairman of the House Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee, I am planning to travel to both the Michoud Assembly Facility in Louisiana and the Stennis Space Center in Mississippi. I am looking forward to meeting some of these brave individuals, both at Michoud and at Stennis. Since I became the Chairman of this Subcommittee in 2005, I have visited 7 of NASA's 10 facilities around the country. I am looking forward to visiting and to learning even more of the importance of these NASA centers to our Nation's space program. Today, I want to extend thanks and gratitude from the American people for the outstanding work of these brave individuals at both the Michoud Assembly Facility and at the Stennis Space Center.

Mr. GORDON. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BOEHLERT. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by

the gentleman from New York (Mr. BOEHLERT) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 892, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1615

#### HONORING THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE VETERANS HOMES

Mr. BRADLEY of New Hampshire. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 347) honoring the National Association of State Veterans Homes and the 119 State veterans homes providing long-term care to veterans that are represented by that association for their contributions to the health care of veterans and the health-care system of the Nation.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 347

Whereas the National Association of State Veterans Homes was established in 1954 by a group of administrators of State veterans homes to represent the interests of those homes in a unified voice before Congress and the Executive Branch;

Whereas the National Association of State Veterans Homes functions on an all-volunteer basis and focuses on endeavors that improve the conditions of care furnished to veterans by State veterans homes, elevate and monitor the qualifications for managers of such homes, and provide continuing education standards for staff who provide care to veterans in State veterans homes;

Whereas the National Association of State Veterans Homes has been and continues to be in the forefront of developing and supporting new methods and models for providing long-term care services to elderly veterans, such as hospice care, respite care, Alzheimer's care, and adult day health care;

Whereas State veterans homes, which provide long-term care to thousands of veterans, were established initially in the States of Connecticut, Kansas, Ohio, and Maine in 1868 to house, feed, and care for thousands of homeless, wounded, and permanently scarred Union soldiers and thus have been in existence since before the establishment of the Department of Veterans Affairs, the earlier Veterans' Administration, and its predecessor agencies;

Whereas in 1888 Congress authorized the Federal payment of a daily allowance of 20¢ for the care of each former soldier or sailor in a State home-hospital, an allowance that continues today in the form of a per diem grant program administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs that is authorized to provide up to 50 percent of the average daily cost of care, but currently provides only approximately 30 percent;

Whereas the Department of Veterans Affairs further participates in the care of veterans in State homes with a matching grant program to support construction and major renovation projects to sustain those homes and build towards sufficient levels of available, high-quality health care;

Whereas the State veterans homes offer long-term services to eligible veterans in need of such services on certification of the

Department of Veterans Affairs at 119 facilities in 47 states and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico;

Whereas the States determine the allocation of nursing home beds in individual facilities, and establish the eligibility of veterans and their dependents to occupy those beds, following Federal guidelines;

Whereas within the limits of their capacities, the State veterans homes provide care for over 27,500 veterans each day, accounting for more than 50 percent of the total national long-term care bed capacity for veterans, thereby sharing the enormous responsibility of caring for veterans with the Department of Veterans Affairs in an admirable partnership;

Whereas State veterans homes provide quality care for elderly and disabled veterans at an average daily cost that is significantly less than nursing homes operated by the Department of Veterans Affairs;

Whereas the number of elderly veterans, particularly those over age 85, continues to rise and the need for long-term care services for those veterans will continue to rise in the coming years; and

Whereas the Nation's State veterans homes continue to achieve their purpose of improving and sustaining the health of elderly, sick, and severely disabled veterans by assuring access to affordable nursing care in settings that provide personal dignity to truly deserving veterans, often at the end of lives spent in service to the Nation: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That Congress—*

(1) honors the National Association of State Veterans Homes and the 119 State veterans homes providing long-term care to veterans that are represented by that association for their significant contributions to the health care of veterans and to the health care system of the Nation;

(2) commends the thousands of individuals who work in, or on behalf of, State veterans homes for their contributions in caring for elderly and disabled veterans;

(3) recognizes the importance of the partnership between the States and the Department of Veterans Affairs in providing long-term care to veterans; and

(4) affirms the support of Congress for continuation of the State homes program to address the known and anticipated needs of the Nation's veterans for institutional long-term care services.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Hampshire (Mr. BRADLEY) and the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. SALAZAR) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Hampshire.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BRADLEY of New Hampshire. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H. Con. Res. 347.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Hampshire?

There was no objection.

Mr. BRADLEY of New Hampshire. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I want to begin by thanking my colleague and friend from Colorado for his work in support of this legislation and also thank my colleague and friend Mr. SIMMONS from Connecticut who is trav-

eling and could not be here to participate in this debate.

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H. Con. Res. 347, which honors the National Association of State Veterans Homes and the 119 State veteran homes providing long-term care to veterans that are represented by the association for their contributions. The National Association of State Veterans Homes functions on an all-volunteer basis to improve the conditions of care furnished by State veterans homes and is at the forefront of developing new methods for providing long-term care services to our elderly veterans.

The Department of Veterans Affairs now provides State veterans homes with a per diem grant program which provides approximately 30 percent of the average cost of daily care, in addition to a grant program to support construction and major renovation projects. State veterans homes provide more than 50 percent of the total national long-term care bed capacity for veterans at an average daily cost that is significantly less than nursing homes operated by the Department of Veterans Affairs. As the number of elderly veterans rises, State veterans homes continue to improve and sustain their health by assuring access to affordable and quality nursing care.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SALAZAR. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. SALAZAR asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SALAZAR. Madam Speaker, I want to thank Representative SIMMONS for introducing House Concurrent Resolution 347. This resolution honors the National Association of Veterans Homes and the 119 State veterans homes across this great country.

State veterans homes are essential to the continuum of care for our aged and disabled veterans. In the upcoming years, State veterans homes will play an even greater role in providing elderly and disabled veterans with dignified and compassionate care because our veteran population is aging. Nationwide, the number of veterans most in need of long-term care, those 85 years and older, will jump to 1.3 million by the year 2012.

State homes represent more than a century-old State-Federal partnership that has greatly benefited our parents and their families. Colorado is home to six of these facilities. I have been fortunate enough to visit five of them, and I have seen the fantastic care that they provide firsthand. I am particularly proud of the Colorado State veterans center at Homelake and Monte Vista, Colorado. It has been caring for Colorado veterans and their families for over 110 years.

Madam Speaker, this resolution reinforces Congress's strong bipartisan support for the State homes, and it sends a signal to this and future administra-

tions that we will continue the per diem support of the State homes. Madam Speaker, this is a good resolution, and I urge my colleagues to give it their support.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BRADLEY of New Hampshire. Madam Speaker, I would like to thank Chairman BUYER and Ranking Member EVANS of the Veterans' Affairs Committee for bringing this legislation to the floor. And, as I indicated previously, I would also like to thank my friend and colleague, Mr. SIMMONS, the sponsor of the bill, for introducing this legislation.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to unanimously support H. Con. Res. 347.

I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SIMMONS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the National Association of State Veterans Homes (NASVH) and the 119 state-veterans' homes they represent for their contributions to caring for our Nation's military veterans.

The State Veterans' Home program is a partnership between the Federal Government and the States that provides the bulk of VA-supported long term care services to veterans and their families. I have seen firsthand the importance of this partnership and the quality of services that State homes provide because I am privileged to have one of these homes in my State of Connecticut, at Rocky Hill.

Connecticut's first veterans' home was founded on July 4, 1864, and was known as Fitch's Home for Soldiers and Their Orphans. Benjamin Fitch, a philanthropist from Darien, established the home for Civil War veterans and for children whose fathers were killed in that war. The complex of buildings included a hospital, chapel, library, residence hall, and administrative facilities. At the time, it represented one of the Nation's earliest commitments to our veterans. From 1864 to 1940 the Fitch Home served the needs of hundreds of orphans and thousands of men who served their country in various wars. The Fitch home became the Connecticut State Veterans hospital in 1940 and relocated to its current location in Rocky Hill.

Today, 476 veterans ages 23 to 95, representing all major U.S. conflicts dating back to World War II, are residents at Rocky Hill. Recently, Rocky Hill received a nearly \$22 million grant from the Department of Veterans Affairs to construct a new State veterans care facility and to make infrastructure improvements at the campus. I am proud of Rocky Hill's long history of providing quality long-term care services for our veterans and I am pleased with the government's commitment to supporting their efforts.

Rocky Hill is just one example of the 119 State-operated veterans' homes located across the country. These homes provide nursing home care in 114 locations, domiciliary care in 52 locations, and hospital-type care in five of their homes. Combined, the State veterans' homes presently provide over 27,500 resident beds for veterans, of which more than 21,000 are nursing home beds.

This resolution not only recognizes the value of State veterans' homes, but also the

critical role of those people who represent and staff the homes. In 1954, administrators and senior staff of State veterans' homes around the country joined together to form an all-volunteer, non-profit organization to promote the common interests of the homes and the elderly, disabled veterans that they serve. The organization, the National Association of State Veterans Homes, has been and continues to be in the forefront of developing and supporting new methods and models for providing long term care services to elderly veterans, such as hospice care, respite care, Alzheimer's care, and adult day health care. I commend the organization for their strong commitment to ensuring that State homes receive the tools they need to provide the best care possible for America's heroes.

I would also like to commend and thank all of the individuals who work in the State homes system for providing such a vital service to those men and women who have worn the uniform of our Nation. I believe the work that these individuals do helps us fulfill the promise laid out long ago by President Lincoln, "to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan." They have dedicated themselves to provide the best care possible for our elderly and disabled veterans, and we in Congress must equally dedicate ourselves to ensure that they continue to receive sufficient support and resources from the Department of Veterans Affairs to maintain that quality of care.

H. Con. Res. 347 honors the invaluable work of those who staff State veterans' homes, the important role of the National Association of State Veterans Homes, and affirms the support of Congress in the continuation of the State Veterans' Home program.

I urge my colleagues to join me in recognizing the importance of State veterans' homes for their role in caring for our Nation's aging and disabled military heroes.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H. Con. Res. 347, a resolution honoring the National Association of State Veterans Homes and the 119 State veteran's homes nationwide who serve the health care services to our Nation's veterans.

The long and distinguished history of the Connecticut State Veterans Hospital can be traced back nearly 140 years of 1864 when Benjamin Finch opened the first veterans' home in the Nation, Fitch's Home for Soldiers and Their Orphans in Darien, to care for veterans of the Civil War. Now located in the First Congressional District in Rocky Hill, the modern day State Veterans Hospital has served Connecticut veterans since 1940. Over the years, the State veteran's hospital has grown to include nearly 40 buildings on the 90-acre Rocky Hill campus, including a domicile providing rehabilitative care and other health care services. In addition to serving the general health care needs of the State's 280,000 veterans, the hospital provides other critical services meant to help veterans in all aspects of their lives, including substance abuse treatment, education and vocational assistance, and job skill development and training.

While the staff of the State Veterans Home provides unmatched professional care for their veterans, the hospital's core facilities and campus infrastructure are almost 70 years old and is struggling to meet the needs of the vet-

erans they serve. That is why I worked so hard in helping the State obtain a \$22 million grant from the Department of Veterans Affairs' State Home Program to fund the first new construction on the Rocky Hill campus in nearly 65 years. This funding will be used to build a new state of the art facility with five new residential wards, a 25-bed Alzheimer's unit, a hospice facility, and an occupational and physical therapy department. In addition to improving service for current residents and veterans, this new facility is especially important as more soldiers in need of medical and mental health treatment return home each day from operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Our veterans have given so much to our Nation and they deserve the highest quality of care in return for their service. Even after 140 years, the Connecticut State Veterans Home remains an essential component of our long-term veterans' care and helps fulfill the promise of quality care for those who have proudly served our country. I look forward to continuing to work closely with our State Commissioner of Veterans Affairs, Dr. Linda Schwartz, and her staff to ensure that they have the resources they need to serve the veterans of our State and our Nation.

Mr. SALAZAR. Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from New Hampshire (Mr. BRADLEY). I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Hampshire (Mr. BRADLEY) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 347.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the concurrent resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### HIRE A VETERAN WEEK

Mr. BRADLEY of New Hampshire. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 125) expressing support for the designation and goals of "Hire a Veteran Week" and encouraging the President to issue a proclamation supporting those goals.

The Clerk read as follows:

#### H. CON. RES. 125

Whereas the people of the United States have a sincere appreciation and respect for the military personnel who serve in the Armed Forces of the United States;

Whereas veterans possess special qualities and skills that make them ideal candidates for employment, but many veterans encounter difficulties in securing employment;

Whereas it would be inconsistent, inconsiderate, and contrary to the economic competitiveness of the United States to neglect the post-military needs of the military personnel who have served in the Armed Forces of the United States;

Whereas many of the brave men and women who have served the United States so gallantly and selflessly in the war on terrorism and the war in Iraq since September 11, 2001, are beginning to return home to be reunited with their loved ones and will be re-entering the workforce or searching for their first jobs outside of military service; and

Whereas the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Labor, the Office of Personnel Management, and many State and local governments administer veterans programs and have veterans employment representatives both to ensure that veterans receive the services to which they are entitled and to promote employer interest in hiring veterans: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That Congress—*

(1) recognizes the importance of the men and women who have served or who currently serve in the Armed Forces of the United States;

(2) supports the designation of an appropriate week as "Hire a Veteran Week"; and

(3) encourages the President to issue a proclamation calling upon employers, labor organizations, veterans service organizations, and Federal, State, and local governmental agencies (including such agencies in the several States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and any other territory or possession of the United States) to lend their support to increase employment of the men and women who have served in the Armed Forces of the United States.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Hampshire (Mr. BRADLEY) and the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. SALAZAR) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Hampshire.

Mr. BRADLEY of New Hampshire. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. BRADLEY of New Hampshire asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BRADLEY of New Hampshire. Madam Speaker, this resolution calls upon the President to establish a national Hire a Veteran Week.

No group in America deserves special employment opportunity more than our Nation's veterans. These men and women have volunteered to put themselves in harm's way to preserve the Nation's way of life and economic system. They serve on every continent, in hundreds of occupations, in remote locations, and in the toughest of combat conditions. They answer the Nation's call to duty, asking in return only our support and our thanks.

Veterans are one of the most diverse communities in America, with significant representation from all major ethnic and socioeconomic groups. Today's veterans bring a solid work ethic, understand the chain of command, are accustomed to working within a system, are highly motivated, and are comfortable with technology. Hiring a veteran to fill a good-paying job is an important way to say thank you for your service and brings a quality employee to the workforce.

Madam Speaker, this bill was jointly referred to the Committee on Armed Services which waived consideration of the bill. I would like to thank Chairman BUYER, chairman of the full committee, Acting Ranking Member FILLNER, Ranking Member EVANS, Chairman HUNTER, and Ranking Member SKELTON for their help in moving this resolution to the floor. I would also